

89B- WEBB

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ORIGINAL

W44/L15

SPEED '89,

Michael Webb

February 22 - March 19, 1989

JUST A HOUSE (1989)

ROTATING GARAGE HOUSE (1988)

TEMPLE ISLAND (1977-84)

DRIVE-IN HOUSE (1970'S)

UP AND OVER HOUSE (1966)

HOUSE OF DOORS (1964)

SIN PALACE (1962-present)

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FILE: DRIVE-IN HOUSE
W373/36

Drive-In House

When the penultimate Glad trash bag is full of garbage and has been taken out, I remove the ultimate bag from the packet and place inside it — the packet, whenever I do this, I come over feeling all architectural: the contained becomes the container, the container the contained.

In fact, it's possible to see the automobile as a house container of reduced internal volume to which wheels and a motive power unit have been attached, ^{... a} wasteful and sad thought, that out there in the burbs, the most luxuriously appointed component of vita domestica sits in the driveway unused for most of the day.

The 'Drive-In House' car project of 1965 is about a car that can plug right into the house and fold out to form a cozy nook to recline in; stereo sound, TV and cocktail cabinet all operable from the dashboard - - what would a dashboard look like in this car?

And the house itself? The 3 stage drawing indicates that there are certain fixed, immobile elements such as oven, family heirloom, grand piano - - but the rest can fold down into the car and drive off along the supporting track structure.

Operated by, get this, somewhat powerful hydraulic devices, the building ^{can} can open up to accommodate more cars, close down as they leave. Favorite thought: 'Nothing of the building is there until the people arrive to make it happen.'

In the 'Cushicle/Suitaloona' series of 1966, the container bit is extended to include Suit of Clothes, ^{So} you have container as a house, car and suit. The components of the scheme are (1) an air cushion vehicle, basically a powered skeleton on which the occupant can drive around. (2) an air conditioned suit in the form of a string bag pulled tight at its neck ^[- see the pad on Dave's Kenn — Dave and Pat can press their pads together and their suits will inflate to form one enclosure] (3) an inflatable balloon structure with pads. Dave enters the balloon in the same way he merges with Pat; he may possess a day suit, a tuxedo, she a swimsuit, an evening gown, the outer wall of the balloon becomes a wardrobe.

^{— cut? unclear.}

Into the arc of a diver

Michael Webb was a founding member of Archigram could get it Tuesday)ung architects and students responsible for a blingingly brilliant series of high-tech projects that put London on the world architectural map at about the same time as the Beatles and Rolling Stones made history, Virtually none of the 'walking cities,' 'Plug-in cities,' 'capsule houses,' 'nostalgiboxes,' or 'cushicles' were built-as opposed to mocked-up for exhibitions at Harrods - but the architectural media of other lands devoured them wholesale.

In those days Michael Webb was very much a hard-ware designer. In his fourth year at the Poly (the Regent Street Polytechnic in London) he designed a headquarters for the Association of Furniture Manufacturers that looked like a whole set of baggy human organs supported on a structural frame. The style was dubbed 'bowellism' by his tutors and the project became so famous that 20 years later the New York Museum of Modern Art and the Gillman Paper Corporation each bid for the five drawings.

After 'bowellism,' Webb designed a Sin Centre for Leicester Square, a phenomenal mixed media entertainment complex like that promoted in various forms by Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood for several years. Then in 1966, already in America and teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design, he embarked on the design of the 'cushicle,' a light-framed, single person mobile space enclosure which he later developed into the 'suitaloon,' a two-person wheeled life support system.

These fascinating micro-environments, perhaps derived in some ways from contemporaneous Mercury and Apollo space capsules, foreshadowed an impermanent, consumerist architecture located somewhere between clothes and camping kit. Nothing has come of them yet, but given today's vast nomadic urban populations of young people, one day it will.

Martin Pawley,

The Guardian, London. May 4, 1987.

(An excerpt from a review of Michael Webb's exhibition of 'Temple Island' at the Architectural Association in 1987)

The Sin Palace and the Tube

A story is told about Webb carrying a model of the Sin Palace through the London Underground. Rushing to enter a train, he was not quite quick enough and the model was caught in the closing doors, crushed. It had to be rebuilt from scratch. T.E. Lawrence left the completed manuscript of the 'Revolt in the Desert' in a London railway station. It had to be rewritten from scratch. What do these stories have in common? The perils of the rails? The fragility of creation? The tenuousness of record? The wages of sin? No, just two representations of the necessity of a caesura, a cadence to wandering. For his part, Webb denies the incident in the tube, having moved on to cones.

Michael Sorkin

(an excerpt from *Canticles for Mike* in *Temple Island*)